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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001218

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: S/C MCCARTHY'S MEETINGS WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND
VICE MINISTER JORGE VALERO

REF: A. CARACAS 01192
[1](#)B. CARACAS 01191
[1](#)C. CARACAS 01193

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Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MELISSA G. RHODES
FOR 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In separate events, Special Coordinator for Venezuela Deborah McCarthy met June 13 with National Assembly (NA) First Vice President Desiree Santos Amaral, NA Foreign Relations Committee President Saul Ortega, Vice Foreign Minister for North American and Multilateral Affairs Jorge Valero and Director of the Office of North American and Multilateral Affairs Yaneth Arocha. The legislators accused the USG of trying to smear the BRV's international image, citing Venezuela's Tier 3 designation in the Trafficking in Persons report as an example. They then moved to discuss their interest in broader exchanges with members of the U.S. Congress. In contrast, Valero described his meeting with WHA Assistant Secretary Shannon during the OASGA as "useful" and thought the BRV had agreed on far more issues with the U.S. delegation than with other countries' delegations. S/C McCarthy emphasized the need for continued dialogue and bilateral cooperation. During the meeting with Valero, the Ambassador suggested visa reciprocity, civil aviation, and extradition as three areas for potential cooperation.

"You Don't Understand the Revolution"

[1](#)2. (C) Special Coordinator for Venezuela Deborah McCarthy, accompanied by Political Counselor and Poloff (note-taker), met July 13 with National Assembly (NA) First Vice President Desiree Santos Amaral and NA Foreign Relations Committee head Saul Ortega. Santos Amaral began by blasting Venezuela's Tier 3 designation in the recently released Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report noting that it put Venezuela in the same category as Cuba (Ref A). She said the NA "categorically rejects" USG attempts to malign the BRV and the Bolivarian Revolution and that Venezuela demands respect for its sovereign decisions. Ortega added that Venezuela does not want to be on any USG list, "whether at the top or the bottom." Santos Amaral accused the USG of conducting an international media campaign against Venezuela, claiming that she had once counted within a one-month period over 70 local press articles featuring negative USG comments or reports. In response, S/C McCarthy noted that there were many media articles on the negative aspects of the relationship,

including many which reported the multiple anti-USG remarks made by senior officials of the BRV. Both countries need to focus beyond the media content.

13. (C) Santos Amaral attributed the criticism to a lack of U.S. understanding about the profound social and political transformation that Venezuela is currently experiencing. She explained that the BRV wants to have good bilateral relations, citing the CITGO heating oil giveaways as an example. Ortega noted the positive, long-standing commercial relationship the two countries share, and said his committee always meets with Venamcham and other U.S. business representatives to discuss their concerns and problems when they arise. (Note: During a July 13 lunch, Venamcham board members told S/C McCarthy their access to parliamentarians has substantially decreased. Septel.) Ortega acknowledged that bilateral relation had experienced ups and downs, but thought that if the BRV could have a positive working relationship with Colombia, despite their traditional rivalry and ideologically different governments, the BRV and USG could come to some sort of understanding.

Trip to Washington

14. (C) Santos Amaral described the National Assembly delegation's mid-May trip to Washington as a success. She said they were able to present a more balanced view of the RCTV decision to several congressmen and Freedom House representatives, and received mostly positive responses. Ortega mentioned that during the visit he raised the possibility of reviving the Venezuelan-U.S. legislative friendship group upon the arrival of a new U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela.

15. (C) Noting the idea of re-launching the bilateral

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legislative group, S/C McCarthy emphasized the need to maintain channels of communication, exchange information, and collaborate on areas of mutual interests. She and PolCouns noted that increased exchanges of information, on TIP-related issues for example, could avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. McCarthy also noted that the TIP report was required by Congress and, like other reports, measured the level of bilateral cooperation. If there is none, the report will reflect this. McCarthy underscored the importance the United States attaches to maintaining its long-standing commercial and social relations with Venezuela, as well. Ortega and Santos Amaral agreed.

Valero Relatively Upbeat on Bilat Relations

16. (C) In contrast to the NA encounter, S/C McCarthy's meeting with Vice Minister for North American and Multilateral Affairs Jorge Valero and Director of the Office for North American and Multilateral Affairs Yaneth Arocha was more cordial. The Ambassador, PolCouns, and Poloff (note-taker) accompanied McCarthy. Although Valero criticized Venezuela's Tier 3 TIP designation, he noted that the OASGA had generally gone well, with the BRV agreeing on far more issues with the U.S. delegation than with other countries' delegations. He also described his meeting with the Assistant Secretary for WHA as "useful" and said he had informed President Chavez of the discussion. Valero said the BRV was pleased with progress made toward the OAS Social Charter and that the BRV's Western Hemisphere Ambassadors have been ordered to promote implementation of the Charter's eight-point plan.

17. (C) The Ambassador and S/C McCarthy stressed the importance of maintaining channels of communication and

bilateral cooperation. The Ambassador raised visa reciprocity, civil aviation, and extradition requests as three potential areas of future cooperation. S/C McCarthy also notified Valero of the USG's appeal of the legal decision on Luis Posada Carriles' limited release. Valero agreed that continued contact was necessary and said his office was committed to working with Post and Washington officials.

Comment

18. (C) The NA deputies were predictably prickly, while Valero was diplomatic but did not make any commitments to move forward to enhance cooperation. The deputies will likely continue to work on re-establishing a legislative friendship group. Valero also will likely continue the BRV's policies of making polite noises in private regarding a dialogue, but only making select concrete movements when it is to the BRV's advantage.

19. (SBU) S/C McCarthy cleared this cable.

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